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Black Americans: Unemployment and Resultant
Economic and Social Problems

By

Samuel R. Griffin

B.S., University of Alabama, 1982

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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Approved by:

Thomas O. Kilpatrick
Chairman, Board of Examiners

EC Murray
Dean, Graduate School

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(Note: In the tables, black refers to black people and white refers to white people.)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the economic and social impacts of unemployment upon the black American population. There is a discussion concentrating on the plight of young black people battling high unemployment and government policies combating this problem.

Several comparisons are included to show that unemployment is a more severe problem for black persons than for white persons. Inflation is dealt with only very briefly to show its relationship to unemployment. There is also a general discussion evaluating the role of the military as a method for black people to achieve upward mobility to the middle-class. The question of how far have black Americans come or what progress have they made economically (since the sixties to the present) is dealt with. Finally, recommendations on how to escape the environment of continual poverty and to achieve the objective of middle-class status are outlined and discussed.

Before going any further, this paper provides two basic definitions, one for inflation and one for unemployment. Inflation is basically a general decrease in the purchasing power of the dollar. Unemployment means that a person is

not engaged in a gainful occupation. It is the involuntary idleness of workers. To put it another way, an individual is without a job and, therefore, without a constant income when an individual is unemployed.

Poverty and the Effects of Inflation

Inflation seems to hurt most individuals, especially the poor. Those people who live on fixed incomes or whose incomes are very low, tend to be affected in an adverse way by inflation. American black people are one of the first groups hurt or affected by inflation because their incomes are generally much lower than American white people. As prices rise, their dollars cannot buy as much as the same amount in the past; black Americans (as a whole) are continually faced with this problem of rising prices with a relatively low income.¹

The longer inflation lasts, the more financial trouble American black people, as a whole, find themselves in. To make their monies go further or stretch, they shop for whatever bargains that they can find. They tend to do whatever it takes to survive; most of them have been poor at one time or another, so they have some knowledge of how to stretch their incomes. An example is buying Kool-Aid instead of soft drinks to save money.

Inflation, if a person has a job, usually reduces a person's purchasing power. If an individual becomes unemployed during a time of increasing inflation, this

exacerbates the problem of trying to provide for himself and his family.

CHAPTER II
BLACK UNEMPLOYMENT EXPLORED

Unemployment impacts heavily upon American black people. Unemployment has historically been twice as high for black people as it has for white people (see table 1).

TABLE 1
Unemployment Rate (Percentage) *

Year	White	Black	Ratio to White
1972	5.1	10.4	2.0
1975	7.8	14.8	1.9
1976	7.0	14.0	2.0
1977	6.2	14.0	2.3
1978	5.2	12.8	2.5
1979	5.1	12.3	2.4
1980	6.3	14.3	2.3
1981	6.7	15.6	2.3
1982	8.6	18.9	2.2
1983	8.4	19.5	2.3
1984	6.5	15.9	2.4
1985	6.6	15.6	2.4

* Unemployed as percentage of civilian labor force in specified group.

Note: The source has no data for 1973-74.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1986, Ed. 106, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), 406.

Economic Impact of Unemployment

Millions of American black people have benefitted from the social programs of the sixties and seventies but many have not escaped the world of poverty.

The median income of black American families compared to white American families has constantly stayed around 56 percent plus or minus 5 percent even after all the monies that have been poured into programs by the government (see table 2).

TABLE 2

Median Household Income In Current Dollars

Year	White	Black	Percentage of White
1967	7,449	4,325	58.1
1970	9,097	5,537	60.1
1971	9,443	5,578	59.1
1972	10,173	5,938	58.3
1973	11,017	6,485	58.9
1974	11,710	6,964	59.5
1975	12,340	7,408	60.0
1976	13,289	7,902	59.5
1977	14,272	8,422	59.0
1978	15,660	9,411	60.0
1980	18,684	10,764	57.6
1981	20,153	11,309	56.1
1982	21,117	11,968	56.6
1983	21,886	12,443	56.8
1984	23,647	13,471	56.9

Note: The source has no data for 1968-69.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1986, Ed. 106, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), 445.

One in three black people live in poverty with very little hope of progressing to a better economic level. This is another percentage that has changed very little since before the civil rights movement of the sixties (see table 3).

TABLE 3
Percentage Below Poverty Level

Year	White	Black	Numbers Black*
1966	12.2	41.8	1,620
1969	9.5	32.2	1,366
1970	9.9	33.5	1,481
1971	9.9	32.5	1,484
1972	9.0	33.3	1,529
1973	8.4	31.4	1,527
1974	8.6	30.3	1,479
1975	9.7	31.3	1,513
1976	9.1	31.1	1,617
1977	8.9	31.3	1,637
1978	8.7	30.6	1,622
1979	8.9	30.9	1,666
1980	10.2	32.5	1,826
1981	11.1	34.2	1,972
1982	12.0	35.6	2,158
1983	12.2	35.7	2,161
1984	11.5	33.8	2,094

*Numbers in Thousands.

Note: The source has no data for 1967-68.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1986, Ed. 106, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), 457.

Black people are much more likely than white people to receive government assistance, be crime victims, or commit crimes, rent rather than own their homes, live without

modern-day conveniences, or live in sub-standard housing.² These problems can be linked either directly or indirectly to the unemployment situation of black people in America.

In an article in the 28 May 1984 edition of Jet, one research study showed that more than 4 million black men, 46 percent of the 8.8 million who are of working age, were unemployed.³ Because of high unemployment, it has been suggested by many observers that many black people have simply given up and stopped trying to find a job; in other words, unemployment has discouraged them from seeking work. The chronically unemployed become very frustrated and this frustration releases itself in many, usually negative reactions, such as drug and alcohol abuse or committing crimes.

These discouraged job-seekers have caused a very evident decline in the labor force participation measures for black people. Starting in 1966, black male labor force participation began to decrease substantially faster than that of white males. By 1972, a gap of 5.9 percent existed between black and white males; in 1976, the distance had widened to 7.7 percent.⁴

Social Impact of Unemployment

The chronically unemployed have (in many cases) simply given up and become burdens on society, as a whole. Many also have wives and children at home to support. Since these black men cannot support them, money and support must be provided somehow. This support is often provided through public assistance. Black people are prime users of such programs as Food Stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and other public assistance programs.⁵

Black people who have been raised on welfare dependency have little knowledge or experience with earning incomes and occupations. They have always been given hand-outs and know very little of how to escape the ghetto.

If the husband and wife are together in the black home, when the husband becomes unemployed, the family will usually drop below the poverty line. More often, the husband's income is the larger, if both work. Consequently, the husband may lose his self-respect and leave the home.

Female Heads of Households

Roughly 50 percent of all black American households with children are now headed by women.⁶ Adult males are typically expected to provide incomes for household maintenance. One way is to leave home, permitting the wife to sign up for public assistance programs. Again, when the husband cannot provide for his family, he may feel worthless and lose self-esteem.

For many black men (and black people as a whole) this is a time of intolerable suffering. The pain and shame that come upon many American black people who want to work results in loss of self-respect, frustration, and depression.

These black people add to the growing underclass in poverty. The increase in the number of black female heads of households shows no sign of slowing down (see table 4).

TABLE 4

Black Female Householders

Year	Black Households*	Female*	Percentage of Total
1960	5,134	1,476	28.7
1970	6,223	2,161	34.7
1975	7,262	2,917	40.2
1980	8,586	3,751	43.7
1984	9,236	4,227	45.8

*Numbers in Millions.

Note: The source has no data for the years missing.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1986, Ed. 106, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), 40.

Currently, more than 60 percent of black female heads of households with children live in poverty.⁷ If there is an older child in the family, the child may have responsibilities to contribute to the family's income. Nearly 25 percent of black teenagers drop out of school.⁸ Some of these drop out of school to help their mothers.

Therefore, the poverty cycle continues, for these children do not have an adequate education. If they do obtain a job, it is usually low-paying, just like their mother's job. Lack of education basically eliminates their chances to advance or it severely reduces their chances for better jobs.⁹

Often, the mother is too tired when she comes home from work or simply does not develop her children, and the children grow up knowing and learning the streets well, but lacking two important factors important to many employers: sense of responsibility and a high level of self discipline.

The trends show that the situation for black Americans continues to be negative. Almost 60 percent of all black children born in 1983 were born to single mothers. From 1977 to 1982, 93.4 percent of first births to black women between 15 to 17 years of age were out of wedlock, compared to 54.9 percent 30 years ago.¹⁰

With the high birthrate for unwed black women, the high divorce rate that affects the nation as a whole, and the many numbers of black men who have left their families because of their unemployment, the number of black female heads of households have steadily increased. (The high birthrate for unwed black women is discussed in the next section.)¹¹

In addition to unemployment, there are other factors not discussed in detail that result in black males leaving

their wives and children or being absent from their families. One reason is that some black men no longer want the responsibility of a wife and children; another reason is the changing sexual mores of many people today.¹²

These women and their children are the new poor. Families headed by just women have had results just as good in raising their children as families with two parents. But quite often, black females and their children will live in poverty.

It is a very alarming fact that 70 percent of black children under 18 years of age who live with a female head of household are being raised in poverty. These young children will probably never know any other life except poverty, will have few positive role models, will lack parental guidance, will quit school, become involved in drug and substance abuse or street crime, and the end result is that they too will be unemployed.¹³

The link between the rise in black female heads of households and black male unemployment is very evident and direct. From 1979 to 1985, the percentage of black female heads of households basically matched the percentage of black males that were unemployed or that had abandoned the labor force. Both the number of black men that were unemployed or that had abandoned seeking a job rose by 700,000, while the number of black female heads of

households also rose by the same amount from 1979 to 1985.¹⁴

Traditional Family Fading

The erosion of the traditional black male head of household is an economic and social off-shoot of high black unemployment, especially black male unemployment.

The birthrate for single black women was 98 live births per 1,000 black women in 1960; in 1970, it was 90 per 1,000; in 1980, the number was 77 live births per 1,000. While the birthrate is decreasing, a look at the population growth as a whole provides a better understanding of what these numbers actually mean.¹⁵

In 1980, 29 out of every 1,000 single women gave birth to a live baby; in 1960, the figure was 22. Although the birthrate declined 24 percent during this period, the total number of births has increased due to the growing population base. Roughly 224,000 children were born to unmarried mothers in 1960; the number of children born to unmarried mothers increased substantially to 665,747 by 1980. The number had tripled in just 20 years.¹⁶

The high birthrate for unwed black females has been and will continue to be a major social problem of black Americans unless something is done to correct the situation soon. For black people, the problem of children being born out of wedlock started slowly and gained speed as the population increased. Black illegitimate births increased slowly, in terms of percentages, from 1950 to 1963. The

percentage increased during this time frame from 17 percent to 23 percent of all black births in America. If this trend had continued at the same pace, by 1980, there would have been a 6.8 percentage points increase to 29.8 percent by 1980. However, there was a sharp increase in the trend. The increase was almost four times the previous pace. In 1980, 48 percent of live births to black women were to single women, compared to just 17 percent in 1950.¹⁷

Seventy-eight percent of black families in 1950 were two-parent households. During the same year, 88 percent of white households were headed by a husband and wife team. Through 1967, the percent of black families headed by two parents ranged between 72 to 75 percent. The percent for white families headed by two parents did not change significantly during this same time frame. In 1968, a sharp decline started that continues to this day.¹⁸ In 1968, the percentage of black families headed by a husband and his wife declined to 69 percent. During the next five years, the percentage declined to 63 percent. By 1980, the percentage of black husband-wife families had declined 13 percent in 12 years to a low of 59 percent. For white husband-wife families, the decline was only 3 percent during the same 12 year period.¹⁹

Fifty percent of all black families with children are headed by females; the comparable percentage for white females is 15 percent. Since 1960, black female heads of

households have more than tripled in total number in the United States. In addition, the median income for black female heads of households is less than one-third that of the nation as a whole.²⁰

The economic status of black Americans can be analyzed by considering family composition. The poverty rate for black households with an employed husband and his wife dropped significantly from over 50 percent in 1959 to 15 percent in 1983. During the same period for black American female heads of households (no husband present), the poverty rate declined from 70 percent to 54 percent. In constant dollars, the median income for black female heads of households has dropped by 14 percent while the median income for a black married household has risen 11 percent since 1968.²¹

Presently, some 4,600,000 black children in the United States are being reared in households without fathers; 3,200,000 or 70 percent of these children live in conditions of poverty.²²

With 46 percent of all American black men unemployed, or have stopped seeking employment, or are statistically unaccounted for, it should not be a major surprise that there is an increase in black females having sole responsibility for raising their children. In addition, 925,000 working-age black men cannot be accounted for in the census; this represents more than 10 percent of working-age

black men compared to less than 1 percent for working-age white men. For every black man that is unemployed, another two black men are totally out of the labor force choosing no longer to try to participate.²³

The percentage of working-age black males who are unemployed, unaccounted for, or discouraged job-seekers is close to three times that of working-age white males. Thirty percent of all working-age black males are in these three categories, while only 11 percent of working-age white males are in these three categories.²⁴

Clearly, the structure of the American black family is being transformed into a less desirable state of existence. The increase in female heads of households and the breakdown of the traditional black husband and wife household are primarily the result of high black male unemployment. The cause rather than the results must be dealt with to reverse this serious situation.

Crime

Some black people turn to crime to survive. They live and learn the harsh life of the streets; often, the only role models they have are drug pushers, pimps, and other local criminals who flash their money and own expensive new cars. These impoverished black people desire money and criminals are often the only people who are viewed to have money and fine clothes while many law-abiding citizens struggle to survive from day-to-day.

Many black people look at these negative models and see a way to gain status, money, and pride. Many join street gangs that rule their local neighborhood, extort money from local businesses, rob old people, sell drugs, and steal. In too many cases, their "work" is illegal. These people are often illiterate and lack skills valued by society. Blacks, usually young, unemployed males, are preying upon the weaker poor black people, using crime as the means to acquiring money. There is also a sense of pride some youths experience in belonging to street gangs.²⁵

These black people replace unemployment with crime, sooner or later acquiring criminal records. These criminal records, in turn, often keep them from attaining future employment since many employers will not hire job applicants with prison records. Therefore, the poverty cycle continues. Frequently, these black people will return to criminal activity.

Urban black people are both the victims and the victimizers. Unemployment breeds frustration and depression along with other negative emotions. Unemployment combined with a bleak environment can breed hopelessness, hatred, and despair. Thus, American black people produce a disproportionate amount of the country's juvenile delinquents, drug addicts, school dropouts, welfare mothers, crime, urban decay, family disruption, and demand on welfare expenditures.²⁶ Black Americans historically have been

arrested at a much higher rate than white Americans for all violent crimes. Black people have been arrested for violent crimes (such as homicide, robbery, aggravated assault, rape) at a rate ten times that of white people.²⁷

Crime is both a result and cause of unemployment to black Americans. Because of unemployment, many black people, especially young males, are turning to criminal activity as a means of a way to survive their situation. Criminal activity is also a cause of unemployment to ghetto black people because as a direct result of criminal activity (usually in the form of extortion, robbery, or stealing) many businesses have moved out of the city and relocated to the suburbs. Many white people have also relocated to the suburbs, leaving black people in the inner cities, which often are declining.²⁸

With businesses leaving, potential jobs for black people are lost. Many urban black people do not have transportation or money to pay for the transportation to travel to the suburbs. In addition, transportation systems in many major American cities are in disrepair, slow, and can be dangerous.

The jobs that these black people hold are usually low-paying, service-related occupations. Income received may not be enough to cover the expenses incurred in getting to a job in the suburbs. Consequently, many black people see their efforts as fruitless.

A job could keep black young people in high school or college, instead, high unemployment seriously hurts black education and schooling. Inner city youths are between ten and twenty times more likely than other young people to be arrested for violent crimes. The low self-esteem turns to violence as a release and a way to make money.²⁹

When high levels of unemployment persist for long periods of time, criminal activity usually follows. A sustained one percent rise in unemployment will be followed by a rise in the homicide rate over that year and the following five years. The effect is cumulative. The rise in homicide is comparable to 5.7 percent of the homicides that happen in the fifth year after the sustained increase in unemployment. A one percent rise in unemployment will also be followed by an increase in state prison admissions. It is comparable to four percent of all state prison admissions occurring in the fifth year after the increase in unemployment.³⁰

The impact upon society is clearly evident. Black teenagers and black people, as a whole, consistently have higher rates of unemployment during longer time spans than most of the nation.

Unemployment must be dealt with effectively or the above percentages could increase over time.

Federal Government Intervention

Job programs, such as the CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) and Job Corps, were designed to reduce unemployment. If the United States federal government provided enough jobs and job training programs, the general feeling of many in the federal government was that unemployment could be significantly reduced over the years. The key to many people in the federal government to winning the war on poverty was to allocate funds for federal programs to create jobs and provide job training. The federal government made a concerted effort to reduce poverty, during the sixties and seventies.³¹

The increased effort by the federal government concerning unemployment was influenced by the civil rights movement of the sixties. The jobs and job training benefitted Americans of all races. From 1950 until 1960, the Labor Department did not do very much to help poor people better themselves economically. In the first half of the sixties to 1964, the Department of Labor spent \$500 million for job programs. However, with the Johnson administration, from 1965 to 1969, \$8.8 billion were spent to fight unemployment. From the 1970 to 1980, spending for job programs totaled \$76.7 billion.³²

Through 1980, a total of 32.6 million individuals participated in at least one of the Labor Department's job programs. The majority of job program funds was spent on

helping youths in their late teens and early twenties who came from poor families. This targeted group was chosen by the federal government as having the greatest potential for occupational development.³³

In 1980, 61 percent of the youths in CETA were under 22. A substantial number were in their early twenties. Approximately, 36 percent were black people. For every five black people 16-24 in the labor force, there were two black people participating in CETA of all ages. In the same period, there was one white CETA participant for every 14 black people of the same age group.³⁴ This comparison illustrates the overall involvement of young black people in the CETA program.

Black Youth Unemployment

The unemployment rate for young black people is significantly higher than that of older black people. The latter have greater experience, job skills, maturity, and ability to accept responsibility. For teenage participants, the unemployment rate is about six times higher than it is for the oldest group of participants. Teenagers frequently have limited skills and some employers believe that young people should receive less than the minimum wage since their skills are low. As a consequence, they do not hire them.³⁵

Black teenagers, on the average, have lower educational levels, as measured by basic skills tests than white teenagers. They have less work experience, overall, than

white teenagers. Therefore, some employers probably assume that a black teenager is not as qualified as a white teenager. Employers hire applicants who they feel they can get along with, who have similar backgrounds, and those with whom they can identify. The majority of employers are white people; many will prefer hiring members of their own race.³⁶

From 1961 to 1965, when there were very few job training programs, comparing 18-19 year olds, an average of 1.8 black teens were unemployed for every one white teen unemployed. It increased to 2.2 to 1 from 1966 until 1969. What is disturbing is the fact that during the latter period, the economy was much stronger and several new job programs were introduced to help combat black unemployment.³⁷

In May 1987, black teenage unemployment was at 38 percent. Historically, this percentage has ranged between 40 and 50 percent (see table 5).

TABLE 5
Teenager Unemployment Rate (Percentage)*

Year	White	Black	Ratio to White
1972	14.2	35.4	2.5
1975	17.9	39.5	2.2
1976	16.9	39.2	2.3
1977	15.4	41.1	2.7
1978	13.9	38.7	2.8
1979	14.0	36.5	2.6
1980	15.5	38.5	2.5
1981	17.3	41.4	2.4
1982	20.4	48.0	2.4
1983	19.3	48.5	2.5
1984	16.0	42.7	2.7

*Unemployed as percentage of civilian labor force in specified group.

Note: The source has no data for years 1973-74.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1986, Ed. 106, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), 406.

According to a May 1987 CBS news report, employment opportunities have improved in recent years because of the "baby-bust" of the early to mid-1970s; there are fewer teenagers seeking employment in some areas of the country. One area is Florida, where teenagers are being sought for jobs at hotels, motels, fast-food restaurants, and other tourist-related businesses. Still, in many major cities, the rate for black teenage unemployment ranges from 40 to 50 percent, especially for inner city teenagers.

Using the average unemployment rate for the period of 1966 to 1980, American blacks 20-24 experienced a 19 percent increase in unemployment. For the same period, considering 18-19 year olds, the increase was twice as for those 20-24 years old, namely 40 percent. The increase was 72 percent for black teenagers between 16-17. At the height of the federal government involvement, for some reason black unemployment still remained quite high when compared to the national average.³⁸ For older groups, those 35 years and older, the same effect as noticed in younger groups was not evident. Older black males actually did better.

CHAPTER III

BLACK PEOPLE IN THE MILITARY

One route that black people are increasingly taking to escape unemployment and poverty and achieve middle-class status is to join the armed forces.

In the military, an enlisted member is paid \$1,039 per month with four years of service. An officer immediately assumes middle-class status as soon as the person accepts his/her commission into the armed forces. In addition, military personnel receive free dental and medical care, free on-base housing, reduced commercial travel rates, and educational aid; they also can buy quality products at the commissary and BX/PX at prices lower than in the civilian sector. (The commissary is the military's version of a grocery store; and a BX/PX is a base exchange, much like a department store.)

The United States military was one of the first American institutions to end racial segregation. In 1948, President Harry S. Truman ended racial segregation in the armed services by executive order. Racial integration was completed in the Army within the following five years. By the mid-1950s, integration was a fact of life in the armed forces.³⁹

As the military opened to black people, many saw their opportunity and seized it. Today, black people hold more management positions in the military (especially the Army) than they do in business, government, education, or any other major segment of American society. Black people in the military have benefitted from increased equity much more than black people in the civilian sector. Inequality and racism still exist in today's military but not to the same degree that is found in the civilian sector.⁴⁰

Some 400,000 black people serve in a force of 2.1 million active-duty military personnel. The Army is the largest of the services; it has a total of some 776,000 men and women on active duty. The Army has both more black persons than any other branch and black persons have accomplished more in the Army.⁴¹ Therefore, the discussion concentrates mostly on black people in the Army.

Black Enlisted

Surveys indicate that two of the major reasons that young black people choose the military are "to better myself in life" and "to get training for a civilian job." Both of these reasons clearly relate to economics. There are very few occupations in the civilian world that can offer an 18-19 year old the training, supervision, or pay (\$608.40 per month plus room and board) starting out.⁴²

Today, three out of every ten enlisted men in the Army are black people. A buck private will receive \$7,668 a year

plus the other benefits previously cited. An enlisted person also may receive an enlistment bonus ranging up to \$8,000 depending upon the job.⁴³

As of the fall of 1985, black people accounted for 17 percent of enlisted personnel in the Air Force, 13 percent in the Navy, 20 percent in the Marines, and 30 percent in the Army. Since racial integration of the military, the Army has been in the lead to recruit black people into its ranks.⁴⁴

A study in 1982 by Martin Binkin and Mark J. Eitelberg of the Brookings Institution revealed that 42 percent of all "militarily qualified" black males come into the armed forces compared to only 14 percent of all "militarily qualified" white males. An individual is "militarily qualified" when the individual passes all entrance tests required for military duty. Recently, the proportion of black high school graduates coming into the Army has steadily exceeded that of white high school graduates.⁴⁵

In 1985, 95.4 percent of black men entering the Army had a high school diploma compared to 87.6 percent of the white men. The enlisted ranks of the Army are the only social area where black people's educational levels (not test scores) exceed those of white people.⁴⁶

However, black people tend to score lower than white people on aptitude tests since black people usually come from a poorer educational background and some tests are

culturally biased. Because their scores are lower, black soldiers are more likely to be assigned to a nontechnical area (such as supply, food service, infantry, and artillery). Black soldiers, currently, make up 46 percent of those in food service, 50 percent of soldiers in supply, and 45 percent of soldiers in general clerical work.⁴⁷

Black soldiers are less likely than white soldiers to be in highly technical fields such as electronic warfare, cryptography, and signal intelligence.⁴⁸

In combat areas, black soldier participation is strong but declining. The percentage of black soldiers in the infantry declined from 32 percent to 22 percent between 1980 and 1985. The percentage of black soldiers in armor and artillery also decreased over the same time frame; black people are overrepresented in combat areas relative to their percentage of the American population. Black people comprise 12.1 percent of the total United States population.⁴⁹

One clear reason that black soldiers score lower on aptitude tests than white soldiers is that their high school educations are not as good, generally. In terms of quality, their education is usually poorer because their schools are poorer. Many inner city schools do not teach their students the basics. Consequently, some students graduate without the ability to read or write. The Army provides further education to these black soldiers; but, it can not totally

eliminate the social and educational disadvantages of years past.⁵⁰

Black women now make up 42 percent of the enlisted women in the Army; they also represent 10 percent of the enlisted women force-wide. There are, currently, 94,000 black noncommissioned officers in the Army; one third of all buck sergeants are black soldiers and they represent about a quarter of all first sergeants, master sergeants, and sergeants major in the Army. Black soldiers comprise 20 percent of all four services' enlisted people, an increase from 10 percent in 1971, and 9.7 percent in 1964.⁵¹

Black Officers

In today's Army, one officer out of every ten is a black person. As recently as 1972, only one out of every twenty-five was a black person.⁵² As far as military compensation is concerned, it is much better to be an officer than an enlisted person. A second lieutenant starts out making \$1,260.90 per month for basic pay, \$112.65 per month for subsistence, and a minimum of \$253.20 per month for housing.

Officers are the executives of the military; there are more black executives in the military than any other institution in American society.⁵³

Ten percent of the Army's officers are black people; 5 percent of the commissioned officers in the Air Force and the Marines are black people; and, 3 percent of the officers

in the Navy are black people. This is an especially positive trend since it was not that long ago when a black officer was a rarity. Currently, black people make up 6 percent of all four services' officer corps. In 1975, they comprised 3.1 percent of the officer corps and 1.9 percent in 1965.⁵⁴

Six percent of the 412 generals in the Army are black people; this represents a total of 25 black generals in the Army alone. The Army has a total of 10,000 black officers. Most black officers come from ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) located at many colleges and universities. One ROTC graduate out of every five is a black person.⁵⁵

Black students on today's college campuses have noticed the progress of black people in the military compared to that in the civilian world. Almost 50 percent of all Army ROTC black graduates come from 21 black schools.⁵⁶

In a 1984 equal opportunity assessment study, the results showed that black and white officers were selected at about the same rate for the advanced service schools, war colleges, and command assignments that are so valuable to career progression in the Army.⁵⁷

CHAPTER IV

PROGRESS OF BLACK PEOPLE

Overall, progress has been made for black people, as a whole. Progress accelerated with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The discussion focuses on progress towards the attainment of better jobs and wages for black people.

According to the 1986 edition of the Statistical Abstract of the United States, black people, historically, have been concentrated in low-paying, labor-intensive occupations such as cooks, janitors, and housemaids.

But, black people are clearly moving up the economic ladder. According to a report by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the number of black people in jobs as managers or officials increased 135 percent, totaling 174,003, between 1972 and 1982.⁵⁸

However, few black people can be found in levels above middle-management, although the number of black managers has increased. As of April 1986, officials of the National Black MBA Association estimated that less than 24 black people headed divisions or subsidiaries of Fortune magazine's largest 1,000 companies. Today, according to Fortune magazine, not a single one of the largest 500 corporations in the United States is headed by a black chief

executive. As a result of the civil rights movement of the sixties, many black people now work in the public sector in the federal government. Much of the increase in white-collar jobs held by black people has been credited to government jobs. Between 1960 and 1976, about 55 percent of the rise in black managerial, professional, and technical employment occurred in the public segment. About half of this rise came from employment in social welfare programs.⁵⁹

In 1959, 14 percent of employed black people were in white-collar jobs; in 1980, the number had risen to 39 percent. In 1980, five out of every ten white people wore white collars to work while four out of every ten black people wore white collars to work.⁶⁰

Most white-collar jobs were professional, technical, or clerical. But, there is still a big difference in the numbers of employed black people compared to employed white people in these jobs. In 1980, 12.0 percent of employed white persons were in managerial jobs while only 5.2 percent of black employees were in management. Black professionals were in nursing, technical trades, and counseling primarily. Since 1960, the number of black doctors has tripled and the number of black lawyers has risen sixfold; however, black people are still underrepresented in these two professions.⁶¹ The avenues to many of these jobs were at one time blocked to black people but now are increasingly available.

Black people account for roughly 10 percent of the nation's 522,000 computer operators; they also account for less than 8 percent of the country's 580,000 programmers and systems analysts. In the next ten years, employment in the data processing field is expected to grow by 7.5 million jobs. The Labor Department estimates that the number of technical and professional workers will have increased by 30 percent between 1980 and 1990; it also estimates that the number of managers and administrators will have increased by 21 percent in the same time frame.⁶² High-tech jobs are the future. Engineers, doctors, and military officers are also good occupations to seek.

Nearly 25 percent of black youths do not finish high school; in some major cities (such as New York City) the dropout rate for high school students is more than 43 percent.⁶³ The dropout rate must be reduced or eliminated. The black students that stay in school must take advantage of school to learn as much as they possibly can. They should seek information from their schools' guidance counseling office concerning scholarships, grants, loans, and any other types of financial aid available. From 1970 to 1980, the number of black students enrolled full-time in colleges and universities nearly doubled. The number went from 522,000 to over one million.⁶⁴ This trend of black students seeking higher education must continue.

Black people have also come a long way in wage equality. In 1980, the gap between what a black worker earned compared to that of a white worker was \$4,993; in 1980, the black worker's earning was 75 percent that of a white worker. Black males in the professional and technical jobs made 86 percent of the salary of their white counterparts in 1980. The wage gap was \$5,271 between black and white workers in 1955; in 1955, a black male worker made 61 percent of a white male worker's wage.⁶⁵

Today, black people still receive less pay for the same work; but the gap has continually reduced over time. When black people become employed, in many cases, all factors are still not equal compared to white people. Black people have not really been fully integrated into the American economy, although progress has been made. Even though the unemployment ratio has not changed over time, many black people are in more and better-paying positions than their fathers and mothers could ever had hoped to obtain.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Recommendations to Escape Poverty

Progress is being made; however, one segment of black people is moving up the ladder to the middle-class taking advantage of their opportunities, while yet a large proportion still lives in poverty.

Based on the material presented in the previous chapters, it is possible to formulate several recommendations. The problem of black unemployment should be reduced when the following recommendations are implemented. While the list is not all-inclusive, the major actions to take include:

1. More black people must seek higher education. The educational level of black people must continually increase. Education is the key to the middle-class.

2. Black people must look to other black people for help. Those that are in the middle-class or higher should tell other black people what programs helped them to move up or how they got to their positions. These successful black people could serve as positive role models for ghetto black youths. These black people may be able to share information or have personal contacts that can help black people get

financial aid for college, find out about what jobs are available and where, what job training is available, or how to conduct oneself in an interview. This is just a process of information-sharing.

3. Black people must obtain skills needed of workers today. They should seek training and experience in well-paying jobs that need people.

4. Inequality and racism must not be tolerated. Wage and occupation discrimination must be reduced or eliminated.

5. Black people must avoid criminal activities. Criminal or juvenile records will severely reduce one's chances of obtaining a legal job. Crime must be reduced or eliminated. After crime is reduced, cities must lure businesses back using tax breaks or other incentives.

6. Inner cities must be cleaned up and conditions improved so that business and industry will want to return. City services need to be restored or updated. Better transportation systems would enable inner city black people to commute cheaply, safely, and quickly to jobs in the city or its suburbs. The city governments must commit themselves to helping its residents and thus, the city in the long run.

7. Affirmative action and equal opportunity programs must stay in place and be supported by elected officials. Many black people achieved middle-class status through these programs. Vote for politicians who have a strong record in

these two areas and who give action rather than lip service to reducing unemployment.

8. An expanded job program targeted at the economically deprived that would give black people marketable job skills and help them find private employment would be quite beneficial.

9. Black men must stay at home with their families. The traditional black family must not be allowed to fade away. The increase in black female-headed homes must be stopped and reversed.

10. Finally, black people must take full advantage of any opportunity to better themselves.

These recommendations will not only improve the economic situation of black people but also of others that are unemployed or that live in poverty. This, in turn, should strengthen the economic base of the country.

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